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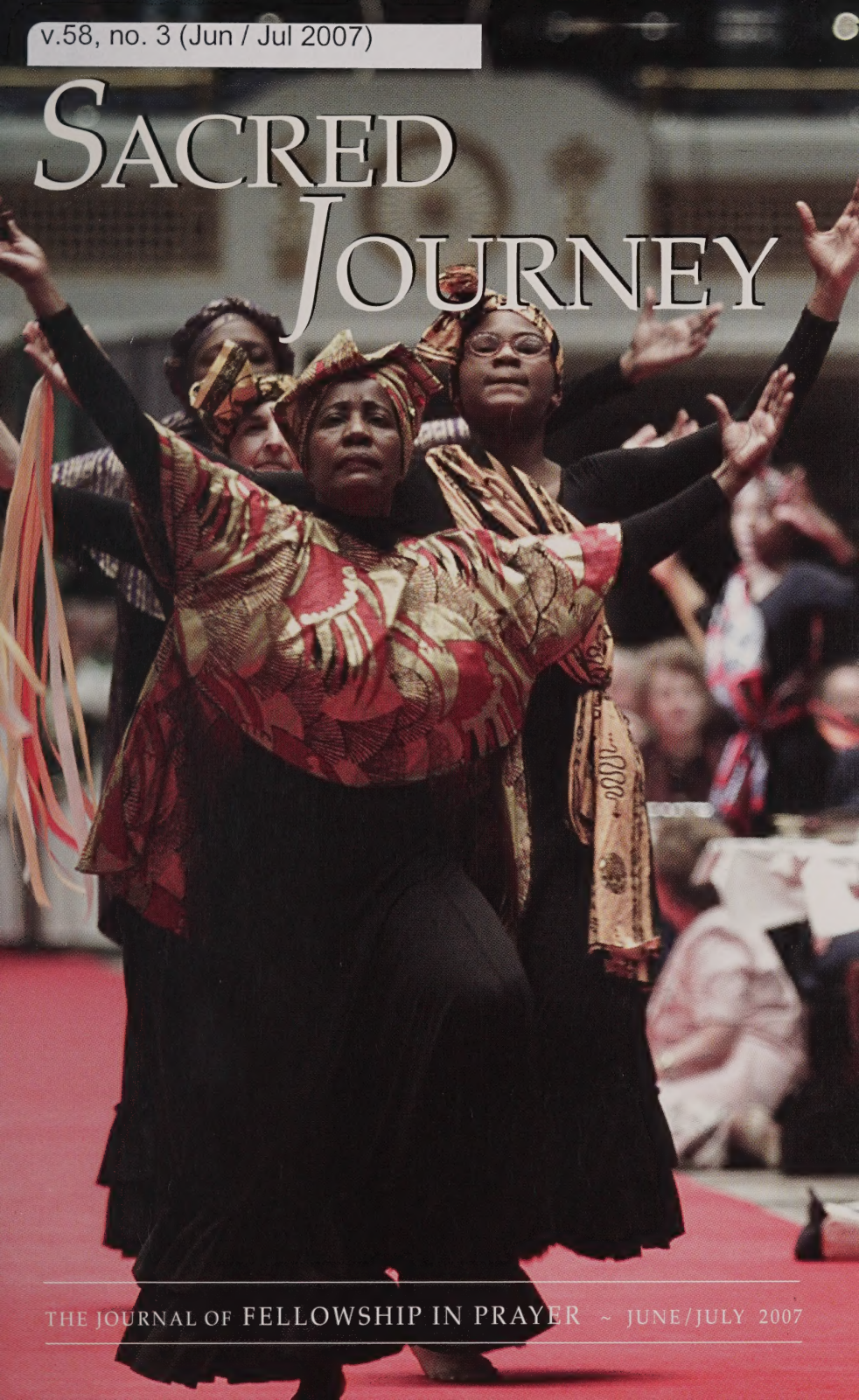

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER ~ JUNE/JULY 2007

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Cover Photo courtesy of Mike DuBose, Liturgical Dancers. Dancers from the Edna Duffy Liturgical Dance Company in Shaker Heights, Ohio, and the Leaven Dance Company in Kent, Ohio, help celebrate the opening worship service of the United Methodist Church's General Conference.

Fellowship in Prayer Welcomes Rev. Paul Raushenbush to its Board of Trustees!

Paul Raushenbush is an American Baptist minister, trained at Macalester College and Union Theological Seminary where he graduated with honors in practical theology. Paul brings to Fellowship in Prayer a wealth of experience, particularly in working with young people. He has served as Associate Minister for Young Adults at Riverside Church in New York City. He has also ministered to street youth in Seattle, Washington and San Paulo, Brazil. Paul is a contributing editor at Beliefnet.com and is currently the Associate Dean of Religious Life and the Chapel at Princeton University. He is the author of *Teen Spirit: One World Many Paths* (HCI 2004) and the editor of *Christianity and the Social Crisis for the 21st Century* (the 100th Anniversary Edition of his great grandfather's first book) with essays by Cornel West, Sister Joan Chittister, Jim Wallis and others. Following is his reflection from the recent Christian celebration of Holy Week and Easter, highlighting the act of listening as prayer.

Listening for God

Paul Raushenbush

This past Good Friday I knelt and put my hand on the crude life sized wooden cross that we place in the beautiful Princeton chapel in memory of the crucifixion of Jesus. I do this each year though I am never sure exactly why I do it, what I will feel, or what if anything will happen. Sometimes it seems like an act of folly or a performance seeking meaning, but each year I reach out in hope that there may be a blessing for me there. This year as I felt the rough planks, a complex but very clear demand was made upon me. Even now it is hard for me to articulate, but it has something to do with identifying the cross wherever it may be. It was a call to understanding and responding to Jesus' crucifixion in the world instead of fleeing it. Today, on Easter Sunday, as I write these words, I am still moved by the immediacy of this message, and curious, anxious and hopeful about where it may lead me.

Immediacy and surprising revelation can often come from prayer even when we wonder what, if anything, will happen when we set ourselves before

the task. By its very nature prayer relinquishes control and acknowledges our reliance on that which is other than ourselves. Prayer surrenders our own power and authority and makes us vulnerable and open to the interventions, wisdom and guidance of God. Prayer is an act of faith.

At its deepest spiritual level, prayer is communication. Much of prayer is dedicated to articulating our deepest desires and needs to God. We pray for strength, for serenity, for discipline, for health, and for greater communion with God. Prayer also brings us closer to those around us and to a greater awareness of the world as we pray for the wellbeing of our loved ones, the healing of the environment, a cessation of war, and for our relationship with our partners. In all of these prayers we reach out beyond ourselves in a gesture of trust and hope in the Divine.

Just as we are reaching out to God in prayer, so does God reach out to us. Listening for God's revelation to us is also a part of prayer. This can be experienced as clearly articulated direction, as well as inspired feelings of the heart such as calmness in the midst of anxiety, an idea that solves a complex problem, compassion towards a person with whom you have been having a conflict, wisdom on a life decision, or as an overwhelming flood of pure love that gives you the blessed assurance that you are completely known and cared for. And sometimes, as the prophet Elijah found in the Hebrew Bible, God is in the silence. We do not need to hear anything to know that God is with us. Sometimes the most clarity will come with the purity of silent communion with

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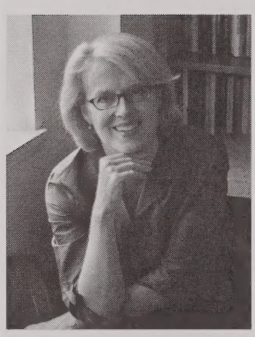
the Lord. As Mother Teresa said: "God speaks in the silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of prayer."

My prayer is that each of you will be enriched by this edition of *Sacred Journey* and will find yourself praying reverently to God by listening with open ears, minds and hearts to the word that God is speaking to you today.

Silence is an Act

Katharine Rhodes Henderson

If Eve, the first woman God ever made, was strong enough to turn the world upside down alone, the women of today ought to be able to get it right side up again! —Sojourner Truth, 1851



How do you create a life of meaning? What motivates people to try to change the world? When faced with injustice, why do some people walk away, while others stop, respond, and act? Does one individual's life matter? How can one person be a force for good? What, if anything, does God have to do with it?

These questions have been the driving force for my own life since my earliest years and the source of many sleepless nights. I am not alone. As a minister and

Katharine Rhodes Henderson is executive vice president of Auburn Theological Seminary in New York City, which strengthens religious and public life by educating leaders of many religious traditions. She is co-founder of Face to Face/Faith to Faith, a multifaith youth program educating a new generation of leaders from the United States and conflict areas around the world as peacemakers in a complex global environment. Henderson received a doctorate in higher education from Columbia University Teachers College and has been an ordained Presbyterian minister since 1982.

Excerpted from God's Troublemakers: How Women of Faith are Changing the World *by Katharine Rhodes Henderson. Published by The Continuum International Publishing Group, Ltd.;* © 2006 *and used with permission.*

educator, I have been listening for over two decades to countless individuals who are haunted and challenged by these questions too. We live in an era when they press at us with particular urgency. Yet even as our response seems to matter more, we may harbor deep doubts about whether it will be "enough." Now that the stage is so obviously global and numbingly complex, it is all the more difficult to imagine how a sole actor can make a difference.

Historically, faith traditions have been a source of inspiration for courageous social action. But lately we have been seeing a great deal of the dark side of religion. Fundamentalists turned terrorists. Clergy as sexual abusers. We have been seeing the dark side of secularism too, itself a form of faith. Capitalism without conscience. Accountants and CEOs as con men. Stock price as God.

What's missing are compelling stories of ethical leadership in the public realm. These we have not heard widely since the 1960s, when the Civil Rights movement demonstrated how religious convictions and public commitment can work together on behalf of the public good. Earlier, figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, Dorothy Day, and Sojourner Truth developed this tradition. More recently, the fusion of these forces has been seen in public figures like Jimmy Carter, Bishop Desmond Tutu, and Nelson Mandela.

For the most part, however, contemporary religion in America has been preoccupied internally with institutional survival and relevance. While the Religious Right has become more vocal and strident, the progressive middle and left have grown silent, and for many, faith has become privatized, something best

kept to oneself and on the periphery of public life. Religious moderates and liberals have appropriated this code of silence in order to operate more fully in a secular context, and to avoid being dismissed as religious fanatics.

FLYING TOWARD FULL DISCLOSURE

Let me give you a personal example. Parallel rifts on the theme could be reported by any religious professional. When a stranger next to me on an airplane or at a cocktail party asks what I do, I must decide how much of my religious self to reveal. The safest answer I can give is "an educator or administrator." If I add that this occurs in a seminary, it may set off an internal discourse. "Did she say seminary (what exactly is that?) or cemetery?" If I am going for full disclosure, I say, "Presbyterian minister whose primary ministry happens in a seminary.

My questioner may initially be cautious, wondering what brand of Christian I will prove to be—the proselytizing kind or the tolerant kind. Those from other faith traditions—Muslims, Hindus, or Buddhists, for instance—may not even recognize "Presbyterian" as Christian. Here I usually get high marks for actually doing multifaith work and having at least a passing acquaintance with their particular religious tradition or practice.

Finally, "minister" inevitably brings us to the question of "God." Ministers are understood by some as agents or intermediaries for God. But the person to whom I am introducing myself may not feel intermediaries are necessary. Or may be convinced that God is dead, unreachable, or an irrelevant category. If "God" does have meaning for the person, it may not

be my meaning. Is God the benevolent bearded ancient in some heaven somewhere? A higher power, an inexpressible spirit? Gendered or not? To be found within nature or in human form? Is the name so powerful that one cannot invoke it? One in three or one among many? Within all of us or an absentee landlord? What images of God, if any, work for both of us? If we were to pursue the conversation, would we be able to talk about our differences?

Most often, when I say I am a minister, people respond with the disclaimer, "I'm not religious." Some may quickly add, "But I'm spiritual." "Spiritual" is a label that is gaining a following, even among those who belong to a church, synagogue, or some other form of organized religious community. For some, "spiritual" means religion-lite, designed to liberate both God and seeker from the trappings of organized religion. This can be handy in times of faith transitions because it seems to allow a person to retain the good and jettison the bad. "Spiritual" speaks to the ongoing hunger to be in relationship to that which is beyond us while freeing us from the rules of how to go about that. It may connote a range of activities we can pursue on our own terms, possibly alone. "Spiritual" seems to encourage religious shopping and experimentation. People feast on a smorgasbord of options, weaving together occasional attendance at high holiday services with bagels and the *New York Times*, Sunday soccer, yoga, meditation, or wilderness adventure. Those for whom traditional religious images and practices still resonate find this spirituality "new age," indiscriminately eclectic, and uncommitted. In some forms, it may well be. But if we grant that in many

seekers the phenomenon stems from a genuine hunger, we must ask what soul-satisfying food is missing from our collective religious plate.

INFECTIOUS PASSION FOR DOING JUSTICE

I believe people are hungry for ways to bring the whole of themselves to their work in the world, to make meaningful contributions to our life together in ways that honor the cultural diversity that is now so evident. I offer my book, *God's Troublemakers*, as food for that hunger. It celebrates the stories of women who are breaking the decades-long silence of the religious Left by modeling new forms of public leadership grounded in contemporary forms of faith. Some claim affiliation with mainstream religious perspectives; others expressly do not and may describe their motivations more generally as "spiritual." Each has allowed herself to feel the gap between the world as it is and a vision of how it could be, and has devoted herself to making up the difference.

All have sharp critiques of mainstream religion, but most have not given up on it. Although they are practicing new forms of ethical and religious leadership, they see themselves as connected to the traditions. That is, they seek to revivify the root messages about doing justice which lie at the core of traditional religion. They are progressive Christians, Jews, Muslims, and feminist spiritual-eclectics whose convictions about a better way run so deep that they have invented organizations and movements to change the world.

These women are irreverent, funny, eloquent, and infectiously passionate about their work. Interviewing them carried me across a threshold in my own

professional and religious development. Some of these leaders, like Sister Helen Prejean, activist nun and author of *Dead Man Walking*, are well-known; others are less visible. Whether religious professionals or lay persons, all have been moved in unplanned ways to work courageously and creatively on some of the most difficult areas of human need: homelessness, violence and abuse, criminal justice, immigration, disability, and poverty. Here are glimpses of some of their stories:

As a child, *Melodye Feldman* had been attacked for being a Jew. Thirty year later, driving through Denver, she heard a journalist interviewing a young woman over the din of gunfire in the former Yugoslavia. The young woman was about to turn sixteen but felt no desire to continue living with the violence around her. Melodye remembered her own hopes and dreams at that age. In that moment she dedicated her life to working with young people to teach them to make peace. She founded Seeking Common Ground and has been working over a decade with Jewish and Palestinian teenage girls to build peaceful community.

As a child in Korea during the war, *Henna Hahn* had polio, almost died of hunger, and lost her mother to cancer. Years later, she was drawn to a news-paper article about the abused Korean wife of an American GI who had been charged with killing her children. After discovering that the woman had been wrongly accused, Henna worked to have her released to her custody. Henna founded a non-profit called The Rainbow Center to address the complex needs of abused immigrant Asian women.

Because her mother fought for her education, *Riffat Hassan* escaped the oppression of her peers growing up as a young Muslim woman in Pakistan. She became a scholar who specialized in interpreting the Koran from a feminist perspective. Several years ago, women activists on the front lines in Muslim countries begged her to join their desperate fight to stop honor killings—the brutal torture and deaths of women in Muslim countries by male members of their own families for purported wrong-doings. She answered their call by founding an Internet-based international movement to stop honor killings.

Sister Helen Prejean lived with the illusion that she had been following Jesus faithfully as a nun all of her life until she realized that she had no direct knowledge of people in need. A chance letter to a man on death row brought her face to face with human suffering and the criminal justice system. Accompanying him to his death began the journey that has carried Helen to national and international prominence as spokesperson in the movement to fight the death penalty.

These are new ways of being spiritual activists in today's world. These women's stories need to be heard—not just because they are doing work in some of the places of greatest need as the caretakers of our common life—but because they are deeply satisfied doing it. Instead of being motivated by obligation, they feel joy, passion, and a deep sense of commitment about their work. All of us at any age need to hear this as we consider how to meaningfully invest our life

energy. And there may be a larger movement at stake as well, one that I believe affects the future of the planet.

BREAKING THE SILENCE

Because of the convergence of a number of factors, I believe that the time is ripe for these fresh images of progressive religious leadership to invigorate both individuals and the broader culture. By "progressive," I mean commitment to the values of justice, equity, tolerance, and pluralism, as well as the ongoing transformation of society to achieve those ends. I use the term "religious leadership" in the broadest sense so as to include anyone whose ethical actions in the public arena are grounded in a faith tradition.

Those who would practice a resistance faith in twenty-first-century America have a challenge that earlier reformers did not face. They can no longer assume that Americans share a common religious vocabulary. In an unprecedented way, they will need to call out the deeper currents of Spirit that run through us all—secular humanists, Christians, Jews, Native Americans, Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists. To do this effectively, they will need fresh images and new language.

Instead of breaking us apart, our religious traditions may hold the key to our reconnection as they speak to the aching gap between what is and what could be. Holding to such visions gives people the strength to be prophetic, resist the mainstream, overcome obstacles, and move beyond the tragic reality of the moment. Being in relationship to an energy called God, as revealed through many different

religious traditions, calls us to live together pursuing justice, mercy, and peace. These are the organizing principles of a moral social fabric. The women in my book, living their seamless lives, lead the way.

The Art of Listening

Benedict Janecko

"Stop, look and listen" is good advice for noticing a speeding train approaching a crossing and it is also good advice for detecting our oncoming God at the crossroads of our spiritual lives. Unfortunately, listening is becoming a dying art in our society which seems to fear silence and being alone. Rather, we welcome the constant sounds and noise of the radio, TV, the roaring crowd, motor scooters, cars, and jackhammers. Our world of high technology is often accompanied by loud noises.

A professor colleague recently shared an anecdote about offering two courses one semester, one on speaking and the other on listening. Everyone signed up for the course on speaking! Where is the interest in

Brother Benedict Janecko, O.S.B. is a member of St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, PA. He is currently a Professor at St. Vincent College and the Seminary, where he teaches courses in Old Testament and Mythologies of the Middle East. He holds an S.T.L. in Theology from the Collegio di Sant' Anselmo and his S.S.L. in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute. He has also been a visiting scholar, workshop presenter, editor, and one of a select group of grant recipients to pursue Judaic studies. His work has been published in several periodicals and in a Festschrift honoring noted scholar Joseph I. Hunt. His book, The Psalms: The Heartbeat of Life and Worship *has received high praise.*

the listening skills so badly needed for ministers, counselors and teachers today? Apparently, most people prefer speaking to listening.

In a retreat I gave to deacons some years ago I asked them to go outdoors to lie on the ground and "listen" for about a half hour. It was August, late summer, and warm enough to lie on the ground without catching a cold. When they returned, some noted the earth reminded them they were clay and one day would return to it. Some had mud under their fingernails. Others brought in a blade of grass or a 4-leaf clover, Still others had in hand a wounded butterfly, a lightning bug or honeybee that had spoken to them. All illustrated the role that Nature, Creation, and Earth play in reflecting on God and ourselves. "Listening" means being aware, being awake to God's presence in and around us.

St. Benedict, the founder of Western monasticism, was well aware of the virtue of listening. He begins his Rule with the word *Ausculta* which means "listen." He encourages his sons, the monks, to develop this biblical habit. Benedict invites all of us to listen with the ears of our hearts, implying the kind of deep and profound listening that leads to obedience and action. Not only is *Ausculta* (listen) the first word of the Rule but it influences every aspect of monastic life. Listening is related to poverty, simplicity, solitude and silence, as well as zeal for God's house. Benedict chose Psalm 95 as his introductory prayer to Matins, the morning office, recited in the wee hours before dawn. This psalm reads, "O that today you would listen to his voice. Do not harden your hearts..." Each day gives us the opportunity to listen anew.

Much of Benedict's wisdom about "listening" is rooted in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. The pious Jew begins each day with a prayer called the Shema, based on Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."(NSRV) This is the greatest of the commandments which Israel is to pass on to her children. They are to bind these words on their hands, foreheads and doorsteps so that all may see and marvel.

There are countless biblical examples of Israel listening to her God, beginning with Abraham and Sarah listening to God offer them a promissory note about progeny and land if only they will give up their present for an unknown future. They cast their lots with the God of the future—and discover a future full of hope. Often nature mediates God's word in Biblical stories. God speaks to Moses in the wilderness through the crackling fire of a burning bush and changes an ordinary routine day into something special. Moses leaves home in the morning as a shepherd and returns that evening as God's messenger, and prophet. Psalm 29 invites readers to listen to the voice of God in a storm, another manifestation of nature. When the prophet Elijah retreats to Mount Horeb (Sinai) after being pursued by King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, he encounters God, not in the noisy wind, earthquake or fire but in the gentle breeze. He hears and listens to God in the sounds of silence. Amos, another prophet, schooled in the desert as a shepherd and dresser of sycamore trees, listens to locusts and summer fruit speak to him of God's oncoming destruction.

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Narrow alley in St. Catherine Monastery, Egypt, with biblical burning bush on left.

In addition to speaking through the natural world, God also speaks with a human voice. The first book of Samuel reports the call of Samuel the prophet. God speaks to Samuel in the middle of the night. He awakens him from sleep and interferes with his life. After hearing the voice of the Lord three times without recognizing the speaker, it finally dawns on Samuel through his mentor, the priest Eli, that God is calling him. Samuel finally responds, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." The great King Solomon asks for a "listening heart" before all else and God rewards him. He could have asked for wealth and wisdom but instead he chooses this spiritual tool when God appears to him in a dream by night.

Psalm 115 issues a challenge to all, "Let those who have ears, hear." The psalmist reminds us that idols have ears but do not hear. How different are the "listening hearts" exemplified by Elizabeth and Mary in the Christian Scriptures. The old, barren Elizabeth "listens" by remaining open to the mystery of God in her life and gives birth to John the Baptizer. Mary, under still stranger circumstances, conceives Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Her prayerful listening leads to her fiat, "let it be done unto me."

The God of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures has a "listening heart." He hears the cries of the poor, the Israelites oppressed in Egypt, and leads them to the freedom of the Promised Land. Later he listens to the cry of his Son, Jesus, on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He responds not with words but with the glory of the Resurrection.

The art of listening or the gift of ears to hear leads to the gift of tears. The tears of a compassionate and loving God drench the pages of scripture, especially the Psalms. In fact, right at the heart of the Psalter we find the Hebrew *ayin* meaning "eye," "spring of water," "tear," refering to the compassionate tears of God for those in bondage and God's desire to provide for them, whatever their need. When we really listen to the cries of the poor and identify with them—our brothers and sisters being sold into slavery or prostitution, those being forced to labor long hours for little pay in sweat shops run by huge, wealthy corporations, immigrants dying in the desert of Arizona as they try to cross the Mexican border into the US to eke out a better living—tears often follow. Tears are a sign that we hear and understand those who are suffering. They also clear our vision to see what action we can take on behalf of those who cry out in the words of Psalm 42, "Tears have been my only food day and night."

Listening is an art, a charism, and a grace. No "how to" book will do the trick but praying for this gift just might. Pray, not with many words, but with a listening heart! It requires letting go of protective barriers—like shedding a raincoat during a shower—and allowing what comes to wash over us. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks reminds us that faith is a form of listening, of being attentive to God asking us what we have done with his gift of life. Listening often leads to a new way of seeing and a new way of being present to the world!

Opening to Sacred Mysteries

Mark Coleman

In the more contemplative moments of our lives, we can benefit if we pull back from our daily existence and ask ourselves the bigger questions: What are we doing here, on this fertile planet earth, revolving in the spread of stars called the Milky Way, amid billions of other galaxies that stretch out into the infinity of space? What is the purpose of our existence? What does it mean to be alive, conscious of ourselves and the complex world we live in, going through this brief passage between birth and death?

Nature is a place of abundant mystery: that the summit of Mount Everest is marine sandstone, which

Mark Coleman has worked alongside Jack Kornfield, Sylvia Boorstein, and Sharon Salzberg. He has had a meditation practice for 25 years, primarily within the Insight Meditation tradition but also influenced by Advantage and Dzogchen teachings. He has conducted meditation retreats in the wilderness of the US, UK, and India, combining his Buddhist practice with nature and environmental activism. He is a workshop leader and Staff Dharma Teacher at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Northern California. Mark lives in San Anselmo, California.

Excerpted from Awake in the Wild: Mindfulness in Nature as a Path of Self-Discovery, *by Mark Coleman. Published by Inner Ocean Publishing,* © *2006 and used with permission.*

for millennia lay beneath an ancient ocean; that we each are born, live a while, and then die. Even with all of our sophisticated tools and scientific disciplines, the greater question of why any of this exists at all remains one of the most intriguing and compelling mysteries.

Most of the time we live in a daydream of our own creation, existing on a relatively superficial level. Sometimes, however, the veil that clouds our everyday perception momentarily falls away. Mystics call this event a blessing, a moment of grace. These moments of illumination are not something we can make happen, for it is the very absence of doing, trying, and grasping that allows these openings to occur in the first place. In the *Tao te Ching,* Lao Tzu advises that the mystery "is only revealed to those with eyes without desire." Being in the natural world opens us to such insights, as does meditation. Even though these profound moments cannot be willed into being, we can make ourselves a more receptive vessel. As a contemporary Buddhist saying goes: "Enlightenment is an accident, but meditation practice makes us more accident-prone."

When we are blessed with these moments of illumination, we touch the sacred, something unspeakably vaster, more sublime, and more incomprehensible than anything we could know through our limited rational mind. These moments of depth are subtle, and are usually nameless and formless. We tap into a mystery that is silent, beyond description. We may taste it as a profound union with all of life, a state in which the mystery of the interconnectedness is self-evident. We may experience it as a blissful harmony, when we realize that love is at

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the heart of everything, be it a raindrop, a supernova exploding in space, or a tortoise making its way slowly through the desert.

These awakenings lead us to greater wonder, to a deeper love of all living things, and to the realization of just how little we know. While intellectual knowing on its own can rob us of this innocence and from the sense of exploration, our moments of grace can allow us to see just how vast and inherently intelligent this universe actually is, and how limited our understanding of it can be. In *Values of the Wise*, Jason Merchey notes that Albert Schweitzer once commented, "As we acquire more knowledge, things do not become more compre-hensible, but more mysterious."

...awakenings lead us to greater wonder, to a deeper love of all living things...

Penetrating the mysteries of life requires a patient attention and mindfulness. The advice from German Poet Rainer Marie Rilke, in his *Letters to a Young Poet*, speaks to this truth: "Try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language...Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer." This process can take years of cultivating the fertile soil of our minds so seeds of insight can burst forth and clarity can grow. Patience and perseverance are thus essential to the path of exploration. Yet, despite the inherent slowness of

spiritual growth, it's also true that insights can arise in any moment, at any time, and radically transform our lives. Chinul, a renowned Korean Zen master from the eleventh century, spoke of this phenomena as "sudden awakening, gradual cultivation." After immediate realization, we must integrate such deep wisdom, which can take years of meditation practice and inquiry. It is said that the Buddha meditated and reflected for forty-nine days under the Bodhi tree before beginning to share his insights and understanding.

Ultimately, the blossoming of spiritual maturity means bringing these insights into the very substance of our everyday lives. We do not want the sum effect of our spiritual practice to rest in some remote ivory tower of wisdom. The proof of our awakening lies in how it manifests itself in our day-to-day lives. As our understanding grows, we naturally begin to express more kindness, care, concern, and empathy with all life, and wish to relieve the suffering in the world. We become less preoccupied with ourselves and more concerned about how we can help others. This is a natural flowering of any awakened heart. The culmination of wisdom and awakening is the maturing of the heart of love that, by its nature, expresses itself in innumerable loving ways. As Leo Tolstoy has it in *The Wisdom of Leo Tolstoy*: "Life consists in penetrating the unknown, and fashioning our actions in accord with the new knowledge thus acquired."

The Wrong Prayer

Carol Hamilton

I hurry to speak first,
  fill the page
with all my sound,
      send semaphores
across the sands
    of beaches
washed free of footprints.

I urge You tilt
  and bend this way,
a sea-spray rainbow
      to display
Your favor on my will.

A resident of Oklahoma, Carol Hamilton had the honor of being the state's Poet Laureate from 1995-1997. Her poetry has been published in several periodicals including Sojourners, Christian Century, Presbyterian Record, *and* Southwest American Literature. *Carol has received various awards for her children's novels and poetry books.*

You Are Not Lost

William Mangrum

Stand Still,
breath slowly, silently.
Listen for neither oak nor
starling are lost.

They live here
in this place. You fear
for knowing not where
you are.

You would fly,
run. But, where to?
How will you arrive there
without beginning here?

Stand still.
Tree, bush and bird—
they are not lost.
They will bind you.

Stand still, listen:
you are here.

William Mangrum is a Presbyterian minister living in Kentucky with his wife and daughter. He holds four graduate degrees. He is presently without a church and is diligently searching for a place to minister. William says this experience is a lesson in learning to "listen."

Alvernia Vespers

Thomas V. Lysaght

At the end of the day
the gull dipped
to trail the tip of a wing in the water
as it sailed across the bay.

God

D. M. Jenkins

You speak with a world;

the wind, the sea,
a butterfly.

I hear

but the last whisper
of the last word,

and know not
what is said;

but Lord, I listen.

Thomas V. Lysaght lives on Long Island with his wife, Sharon, and their yellow lab, Faith. He received a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Vermont and has recently retired to concentrate on writing.

D. M. Jenkins is a retired Smithsonian biologist. He lives near Austin, TX and enjoys spending time with his eight grandchildren.

Now

Serguei Krissiouk

This motionless silence inside
expanding in ringing waves
is quietly crushing the shell
of that what I knew as myself.

I am gone, disassembled, vanished.
There is no remorse, no return.
I have no name, no image, no face,
no family, country, or home.

I am looking at what I once knew as myself,
I am looking—it is a gaping abyss.

I know your presence, my Death,
and feel your soft pushing gaze from behind.

Your sobering touch is flawless,
A reminder with perfect timing—
Shake off this heavy dream, lifeless.
Now is the time for being.

A native of Kiev, Ukraine, Serguei Krissiouk was led through life by his inner thirst to solve the riddle of human existence. He was involved with Anthroposophy and Gurdjieff Work in Europe and the U.S. He is a poet, classical guitarist, composer, and a medical doctor by education and occupation. Currently Serguei is a holistic counselor at the "Tree of Life " wellness center in Seekonk, MA.

Entering the Fire

Sue Robinson

Behind the prison walls I met her...
a young, small frame
carrying more internal weight than a cement
truck full of liquid sand,
scarred deeper within than a valley carved
by ancient glacier slices.
I, the stranger, from the open country
not far from her confinement,
enter her captive world.
She offers me her voice...words rush out
of torment and pain,
pouring forth wounds
of her shredded memories...
inviting me into the history of her hell.
I willingly enter the fire.

Suddenly, I find myself in unknown territory...
a past void of sacred glances,
painted with violent despair,
noisy with groans of suffering.

Sue Robinson is a homemaker and Spiritual Companion. With children now grown, Sue spends most days in silent prayer at their family home, "Resting Wings Sanctuary." She is a Prayer Partner at a Connecticut prison and enjoys writing, experimenting with her art, and wandering in the forest surrounding their home.

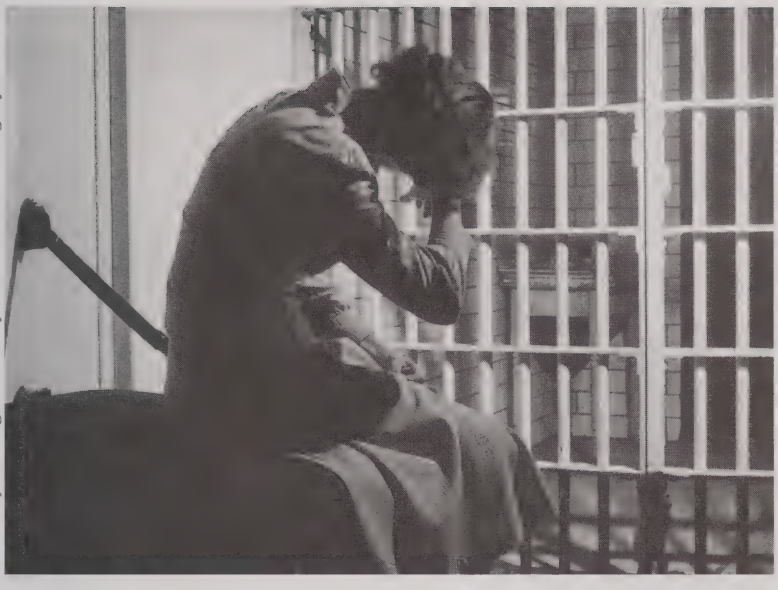

Photo by Ewing Galloway/Index Stock Imagery

My heart is scorched by her flaming story.
The smell of her spirit's burnt offering
brings me to my knees.
I am silently wrapped in her gift of ashes.
Words of comfort stop in my throat,
speechless to her smoldering confession.

Why do I offer my fragmented self...
freely entering the fire in trust?

I touch her burns with reverent tenderness.
Hand in hand, we wade
and jump in puddles of compassion.
Side by side we dance in the pouring
rain of heaven...
splashing one another
in the wet grace of Divine healing.

Answering the Call

A Profile of Hazel Staats-Westover

Hazel Staats-Westover is a long-time friend and advisor to Fellowship in Prayer. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Music Education from Northwestern University and a Masters of Divinity from Chicago Theological Seminary. She spent two years as a graduate student at the Harvard University Women's Studies Program, the only program designed for women at the time. She values her life-long commitment to the three revolutions—peace, civil rights, and the advancement of women. She is a consummate champion for the oppressed and has advocated for change by joining protests and participating in speaking engagements around the world. With the help of women students, Hazel founded the Ecumenical Women's Center at Chicago Theological Seminary. In 1974 she became the first director of the Women's Center at Princeton University after the all male Ivy League School went co-ed in 1969. She was one of the first female chaplains on campus at Princeton University, serving for the United Church of Christ with a special assignment to minister to women. She currently lives in Princeton, New Jersey with her husband, and spends time traveling and visiting with her children, grandchildren and great-grand children. Hazel enjoys playing the piano and

continues to participate actively in groups related to the three revolutions near and dear to her heart. Fellowship in Prayer is honored to share with you, our readers, a bit of her life story as an example of a woman who has "listened and answered" God's call.

She doesn't look like a revolutionary but she truly is representative of that generation of women on whose shoulders stand the women profiled in Katharine Rhodes Henderson's book, *God's Troublemakers: How Women of Faith Are Changing the World.* Her warm smile, sparkling blue eyes, softly curled gray hair and girlish laughter belie a woman who for more than 80 years has with great passion and purpose listened to God's call to follow her heart, to have a voice, to make a difference in the world. She was on staff at Chicago Theological Seminary, while student Jesse Jackson was organizing boycotts as part of Martin Luther King's Bread Basket Program; she protested the War in Vietnam; and she blazed a trail for women—championing their rights and fostering their leadership, particularly in the realm of religion. Empowering women is perhaps what evokes the most passion from Hazel Staats-Westover. When it was suggested to her that she is a recognizable name in the second women's movement, Hazel chuckled as she observed:

> Yes, but mostly this is just because I've been around long enough...You see, I've never published a book like so many of my contemporaries who were powerful leaders in the field of religion. However, if I were to write

a book about my life, I would title it, *Answering the Call* because what has happened to me as a result of responding to calls is literally amazing.

One of my first jobs as a seminary student in Chicago was working with the Church Federation to help Japanese Americans find safe housing when they returned to the Chicago area from the internment camps in California. Every Sunday afternoon we had a reception at The Methodist Temple in Chicago for these Japanese Americans. As many as a hundred came. Later, while working in the Mount Hollywood Church in Los Angeles I happened to be the only minister available when a call came in that a Japanese man had committed suicide and I was asked to go to the home. Apparently, this gentleman had once been a very successful insurance salesman in California and he wanted to return there and re-establish himself. However, the prejudice was so severe; he was unable to do so. Overcome with despair, he tried on two separate occasions to take his life but his wife intervened. On this particular day she had been unable to stop him. I went to the home and found her, grief-stricken, curled up on the bed in a fetal position. To my utter dismay, she spoke only Japanese. I wondered how in the world I could help her since I spoke no Japanese. I stayed a couple of hours and just held her. When I finally left, I felt very despondent, believing there was no way I could have been of much assistance. Twenty-five years later, I was working with a group building an international peace center in Germany. People were visiting from all over the

> world. The Japanese woman's daughter, her husband and children came through. She recognized me and said, 'You will never know how much you meant to my mother that day when you came to our home to be with her!' Her words define what I believe ministry is. It is being present. There are times when you don't have to say a word—no words are necessary to be understood. By simply being with this woman, by her side, with her in her pain, giving of my energy—I had indeed been helpful. This is one of the most important things I have learned on my journey.

Ministering to others was never a foreign concept to Hazel. She describes her family as always having been religiously-oriented, deeply involved in church work. As a young adult, Hazel pursued seminary studies to become a Congregationalist minister (now the United Church of Christ) because this denomination had begun ordaining women and many others still were not. She later became an instructor at Chicago Theological Seminary where she once again heard a call—this time through the women students who petitioned her to create a course that would enable them to incorporate in their ministry the changes being effected by the new women's movement. Using the only book that had been written on the subject, Mary Daly's *The Church and the Second Sex* and magazine articles that were being generated in abundance, Hazel co-offered a course entitled Human Liberation. Thirty women and fifteen men signed up for the class to explore and discuss the issues of freedom and equality for women in a religious context. Hazel reports that it

was the first class specifically targeted for women in any seminary in the United States. To further support women in their evolving leadership roles in ministry, Hazel founded the Ecumenical Women's Center in Chicago. Hazel noted that some of the original leaders of the women's suffrage movement were Quaker and they, like almost everyone else involved, were deeply motivated by their faith.

For Hazel being in the right place at the right time has been a kind of accidental grace, unplanned and unexpected, but an opportunity for blessing because she was open and responsive.

> One summer when I was in personal turmoil and trying to cope with the disintegration of my marriage, I was visiting a friend in Paris—a fellow peace activist—she received a phone call and I overheard her saying. 'I can't get a speaker for that—they would lose their job.' I figured I could speak and wasn't afraid of losing my job, so I offered my services. I didn't know what the speaking engagement was but I said I'd do it. I became the American speaker and walked in the May Day Protest, right next to the man who was running against Pompidou for President of France. The words of my speech that day protesting America's involvement in the war evoked the trust of Vietnamese religious leaders in attendance and we were then able to work together to set up a conference in Paris on Indochina. I subsequently took reporters from the Catholic Inquirer to the Office for the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland.

There, I met a reporter who was going to Oslo. He wasn't going to be able to stay the whole time, so he asked me to fill in for him. I spent eight days in Oslo listening to reports on the atrocities that had occurred in Vietnam. I heard doctors talk about the effects the war had on the Vietnamese people and scientists address the destruction of the environment. My commitment to working for peace became stronger than ever. All of this happened because I answered a call.

Another time the phone rang with a major challenge for Hazel it was the Assistant Dean of the Chapel at Princeton University. He wanted to know if Hazel would come to Princeton and set up a women's center because the school had begun admitting women students but there were not yet women on staff to address their needs. The only catch was there was no salary in the budget for the position. So, with the promise only of a small discretionary fund, Hazel said, "Yes, I'll come and do that." Hazel recalls that the first class of Princeton women was very small, perhaps not more than twenty.

They were daring, adventurous and willing to learn. This spirit is what made the whole women's movement so much fun—from the beginning we had to create it out of our life experiences. There was no guiding authority already in place. We had to figure out how to manage what we were living. It was a grass roots movement that required charting new territory.

Hazel sighed, offering a simple word of summary, "Wonderful!"

Hazel Staats-Westover believes that faith and love have provided her with "the energy to be adventuresome—to trust that she can venture into the unknown—to get in touch with her inner spirit and find the strength and wisdom to respond to crisis."

Her work as a minister, a peace activist, and an advocate for women is deeply rooted in the time-honored Quaker adage, "Let your life speak!" This is how she has answered every call that has come to her.

ILLUMINATIONS

A good word is like a good tree whose root is firmly fixed and whose top is in the sky.

~ The Koran

Nothing in all of creation is so godlike as stillness.

~ Meister Eckhart

The silence within us is the source of all that we are.

~ Swami Amar Jyoti

Even your silence holds a sort of prayer.

~ Apache

When people allow atrocities to occur and they are silent, just as during the Holocaust, the silence is an act. It means you go with it. Silence is complicity.

~ Gretchen Buchenholz

Listening to the eternal involves a silence within us.

~ Thomas Kelly

In prayer it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart.

~ John Bunyan

We hear a great deal, but do we listen to what we hear?

~ Dr. Bernie S. Siegel

PRAYERS

Many Voices

There are many voices in the world
professing absolute truth.
Each stands firm in their version
of divine knowledge
denying the beauty and legitimacy of the other.
My heart intrinsically knows God,
a memory, a birthright.
Quiet and alone in the night
my God hears my prayers
listening with divinity greater then any
symbol, name or structure given.
~ Unknown

Perfect Silence

I see no way of truthfully praising you
For except silence you do not put on any other ornament.
Your true praise consists in perfect silence
Your worship is no outer act,
And union with you is being nothing myself.
But, if, like one whose mind is crazed
And wildly babbles,
I sing your praise:
Bear with it,
O dear Mother.

~ Dnyanadev: A prayer from his commentary on the Bhagavad Gita

The Voice

The wondrous voice, the voice of the one
who attends to the cries of the world
The noble voice, the voice of the rising tide
surpassing all the sounds of the world
Let our mind be attuned to that voice.
Put aside all doubt and meditate on the pure
and holy nature of the regarder of the cries of the world
Because that is our reliance in situations of
pain, distress, calamity, death.
Perfect in all merits, beholding all sentient
beings with compassionate eyes,
making the ocean of blessings limitless,
Before this one, we should incline.

~ Buddhist Sutra

Voice in My Silence

I believe that God is in me
as the sun is in the colour and fragrance of a flower—
the Light in my darkness, the Voice in my silence.

~ Helen Keller

Alone

Grant me the ability to be alone;
may it be my custom to go outdoors each day
among the trees and grasses,
among all growing things,
and there may I be alone,
to talk with the one
that I belong to.

~ Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav

The Bagpiper

Teresa Castaldi Morton

I awoke that December morning with the sense of anticipation one has as a child on Christmas Day or one's birthday. As the brisk cold seeped into my consciousness, the excited flutters turned into a deep dread that crept throughout my body, settling in my stomach. I soon realized that it was Dec. 30th; the first year anniversary of my beloved husband George's death and the second month anniversary of my most beautiful mother's passing. They died exactly ten months apart, my husband at a relatively young age of pancreatic cancer. His was a swift, fairly certain death; eight months after his diagnosis, he was gone. My mother, however, had chronic illnesses which left her infirm for the last two years of her life. Their combined loss shattered my world as I knew it, and I just barely survived in the shadowlands.

That morning, I arose to glimpse a cerulean blue sky with feathery white clouds suspended on invisible wires, a day so crisp and clear that it seemed that all things were possible for most of the

Teresa Castaldi Morton, Ph.D. is a former college professor who is presently a writer and educational consultant living in Princeton, NJ. She received a Fulbright to study in India and also taught in Asia for the University of Maryland. This article is dedicated to the memory of her mother and husband.

world, except for me, for the pain was as fresh and new as if they had just died. After quickly showering, I dressed with the greatest of care, as if I was going to a party or a luncheon with friends instead of a cemetery to visit my loved ones' graves.

My breakfast was interrupted by a phone call from a dear friend who wanted to accompany me to the cemetery. My voice was hesitant in its response since I felt as if I almost didn't want her to come. My grief was so intensely private and personal that I wanted to share it with my mother and George only. However, Wen-tung's kindness and insistence that I shouldn't be alone forced me to acquiesce. "I'll be over in 15 minutes," she said. I dully hung up the phone and gathered my things, lifelessly awaiting her arrival.

My impatience grew as fifteen minutes became thirty, and soon an hour had passed, and Wen-tung still hadn't come. "How could she be late?" I thought. "Didn't she know how important it was for me to get there, to be there with them?" But, then again, the world of grief is such a private one, that perhaps no one can understand the mind of the bereaved. Her car pulled up in my driveway just as I was about to reach for the phone to tell her I was leaving by myself. Wen-tung apologized for being late. She misplaced her car keys, she said, while I murmured something unintelligible in return. I could only be grateful for her very human presence.

We drove with Wen-tung talking about her family and friends. I was mostly silent with a strange eagerness to reach our destination, as if my mother and George would actually be there to

welcome me with open arms and smiling faces. We pulled into the empty cemetery and parked on the street with headstones flanking one side of the roadway. I always had trouble finding my family's grave sites in the sea of gray granite, but I was immediately drawn to a grove of trees which had become my landmark over the past year. These were the trees that sheltered a large flock of birds which had sat quietly in its branches watching the mourners standing over my husband's grave. When the priest had uttered his last words and sprinkled holy water on the casket, the whole flock rose in unison, as if on cue. In one full swoop and with a single, plaintive cry, their black wings cut through the air over the makeshift tent sheltering the coffin and flew away to the astonishment of everyone who noticed.

When we reached the two graves, my throat closed as sobs welled up inside of me. Tears flooded my eyes as I began to pray to God, to the universe, to my husband, to my mother, to anyone who could help me ease my pain and grief. Wen-tung stood there silently wrapped in her own thoughts. Suddenly, we both heard a distinctive, lamenting sound wafting through the air. We looked at each other and caught our breaths. Perhaps our ears were deceiving us. The rhythmic drone continued, and we realized that it was truly the sounds of a bagpipe. We stared at each other, and both of us started to cry, for the significance of that sound on this particular day was too, too great. "No, this is not possible," I said. We turned our heads and looked over our shoulders. Up on a small hillock stood a bagpiper in his tartan kilt playing his solitary, melancholic music. Like an apparition in a dream, he took no notice of us and continued playing. My first

Photo courtesy of ricksteves.com

thought was that he was warming up for a funeral party, but after he played a few songs, I realized no cortege had appeared or was going to.

I couldn't wait any longer and walked up the hill towards him. This vision was real, so I waited for him to finish his song. "Excuse me, sir, for interrupting you," I said, the words tumbling out of my mouth. "I am so shocked to see you here. You see, today is the first anniversary of my husband's death. George was from Edinburgh, Scotland, a Scotsman, and he loved the sound of the bagpipes. In fact, we had a bagpiper play the day he was buried. And, today is the second month anniversary of my mother's death, as well." The bagpiper's kind eyes locked with mine as he offered his condolences. He had just come from playing at the funeral of two police officers up north and thought he'd drive to the cemetery to play for his father who was of Scottish descent and who had been deceased for several years. My heart leapt at his words as he said "May I play a song for your husband and mother?" "Oh, I would be more than honored," I responded in a choked voice.

Tears streamed down both of our faces as the piper played his heart out...

The three of us walked back to their graves, and the bagpiper began playing *Amazing Grace*, a song both my mother and George were particularly fond of. Tears streamed down both of our faces as the piper played his heart out to the two people I loved the

most in the world but who were no longer with me. When he finished, I asked his name. Without thinking, I hugged him and kissed him on the cheek. "I can't thank you enough for your song. It meant everything to me." "It was my pleasure, ma'am." And with that, the bagpiper walked up the hill, back to his father's grave and continued to play the old, evocative tunes, filled with nostalgia and longing that particularly suit his instrument.

Wen-tung and I just stared at one another. She was my sole witness to that very uncommon event on that very extraordinary day. I don't know if I believe in miracles, but no one I know has ever seen a lone piper playing spontaneously in a cemetery. Even my husband's family back in Scotland had never heard of such a thing, for when I reached home, I called them right away to relay the news. And Wen-tung and I immediately thought of her hour long delay that morning. If she hadn't misplaced her car keys, would we have seen the bagpiper? Somehow, we were guided by a higher power that day, affected by serendipitous events, a universal synchronicity which allowed a tiny shaft of light to penetrate the darkness.

To this day, when I go and visit my parents' and George's graves, I look out for the bagpiper. I've never seen him again, but I try to make a point to visit his father's grave, as well. That's the least I can do for the piper with his haunting melodies who gave me such an incredible gift.

ENDPIECE

Have You Seen God Dancing?

Colette Hanlon

My attention was caught recently by an article in which the author spoke of God as dancing with all people on a pilgrimage of love. I found this to be a wonderful image and it prompted me to observe more carefully the ways in which I see God dancing in people around me.

I've seen God dancing in folks who came out to help a young mother and her three children who were in a car accident. God also danced in a young woman graduating from high school who brought a dozen roses for the couple whose generosity enabled her to have a scholarship. God "trips the light fantastic" regularly in children frolicking in the water from a sprinkler, fully enjoying the cool refreshment in the heat of the sun. God does a wondrous dance in the summer stars observed by campers, lovers, and mystics. Refugees, too, remind us that God dances in the sad pilgrimages of life when kind strangers and neighbors reach out to console and encourage one another.

Do you feel caught up in God's loving arms swooping down to lift us and all creation into the dance of life? Look around in these days of summer brightness and busyness. God is here. Do you see the dancing?

Colette Hanlon, SC, a member of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, is an experienced spiritual director, teacher, chaplain, and director of pastoral care whose main interest is in the integration of spirituality in everyday life and work experience. She holds a BA from Seton Hill University, an MED from Smith College and an MA from Duquesne University. She is currently the Spiritual Care Coordinator at Providence Care Center in Lenox, MA.

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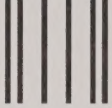

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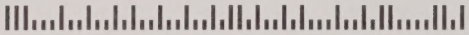

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